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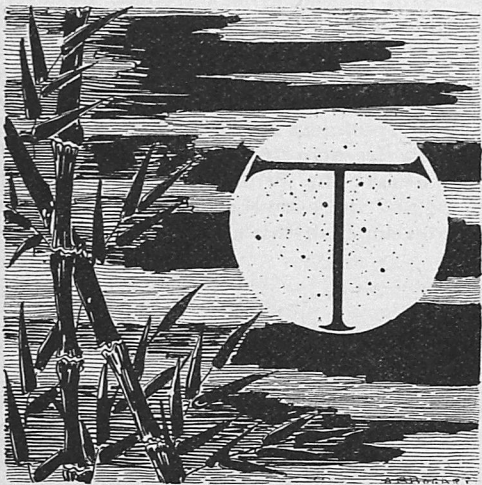
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THE INDUSTRIAL ARTS OF JAPAN.

By A. L. LIBERTY.



THE Japanese are a nation of carpenters, and with them carpentry is a fine art. So I said and felt a few days after my arrival in Japan, and this impression remains with me. I have not time to speak of woodwork in regard to the major constructive arts, the wooden temples and houses, in which the race's genius for simplicity and thoroughness is more prominent, and can only allude to the minor constructive arts which are equally permeated with the same spirit, however unpretentious and humble their intended use. In cabinet work the drawers fit so accurately that it is a pleasure to open and shut them; the little wooden tables, the wooden trays, drinking cups, fans tobacco pipes, umbrella frames, bamboo baskets, buckets, ladles, implements of husbandry, &c., are all formed with rigid directness, and are artistic, each after its kind. The ordinary bamboo hand screen or fan is a notable instance of the successful way in which the Japanese have combined the maximum of simplicity. Taking as a first hint the natural palm leaf, which is not readily obtainable in Japan, they have used a material not at first sight promising, but having the advantage of being close at hand and abundant. From this material (bamboo) and the addition of a flat surface of paper, they have contrived the most flexible, indestructible, and economic fan ever invented, which is withal built up on graceful, simple and true constructive lines. The Japanese umbrella is a simple instance, and the original idea was doubtless borrowed from China; but how far superior in finish and taste is the Japanese development! Other instances are the bamboo baskets, known as Arima baskets, and baskets made from fern fronds at Tajama.

Next in order is the curio woodwork. In the example before me, a little wooden medicine box, or inro, the natural bark has been advisedly left on, because the artist realised it aided the lacquer and metal ornament. In this box has been cleverly contrived by cutting the stem of a bamboo just where a horizontal division of the joint process forms a natural base. This square wooden box exemplifies the respect the Japanese pay to antiquity and quaint freedom in decoration, a combination we arbitrarily term "curio." The box is formed adding a lid to an old rectangular Government rice measure, so venerable that the flat iron rim which once protected its upper edges has been worn away from nearly three-quarters of its total surface. What does the artistic craftsman do under such circumstances? Does he save himself the trouble and cut away the remaining projecting fragment of iron, so that he may easily make lid fit squarely? Not at all. He honors the remaining fragment of rusty iron, and carefully cuts away the under surface of the lid just sufficiently to allow it to fit accurately over the iron. With the same thought he leaves undecorated the almost obliterated incised Government stamp found on one of the sides of the same box, and then, having retained every remaining portion of this relic of bygone days, he proceeds to throw his own personality into the work, adding carvings, and inlay of ivory, of pearl, of bronze, and of amber. These, and the thousand and one similar examples of "curios," must be conceded to be the outcome of and indigenous art.

Lacquer work.—The art of the lacquer work is so intimately associated in our language with the word "Japan" that it has become synonymous with a specific glossy varnish; and yet the process of japanning, or lacquering, was borrowed from the Chinese. But who can look at an ordinary Japanese lacquer tray, and compare it with the lacquer productions of the Chinese, without at once seeing that it has practically become a new invention? In Chinese work we have an opaque surface, gener-

ally ornamented with rigid, finikin, monotonous detail; in Japanese work we have a translucent surface, combined with freedom and spirit in the decorative treatment, and as a prosaic matter of fact, far greater durability. This is true even with inferior work, which has conformed itself to the requirements of the Western demands.

But the higher branch of the lacquerer's art, which has produced the *lacquer de luxe*—an art combining the most marvelous variety in technical combination with incredible thoroughness in manipulative finish—is beyond the possibility of any comparison whatsoever. I refer of course to the *Hori-makiye* (flat lacquer work), and the *Taka makiye* (raised lacquer work), applied to the decoration of inros, tray writing-boxes and domestic and military furniture, during the latter decades of the feudal system. The size of these dainty examples makes it impossible to readily demonstrate this, for to be appreciated they must be closely inspected. And here, or elsewhere in this paper, when I use eulogistic terms in regard to Japanese art, I must not be understood to depreciate by comparison the classic works of Europe or Western Asia, for Japanese art is unique, and (without disparagement I would term it) a miniature art—miniature not for lack of capability, but by reason of the arbitrary causes previously alluded to.

I saw, during my stay in Tokyo and Kyoto, modern examples of the lacquerer's art which were equal to and even rivalled the choicest productions of the past, but these examples were no less costly than ancient specimens, for no such minute and thorough work can be executed without an infinite expenditure of time. The result is the same to the artist, whether he receives his remuneration in kind as a retainer, or honoured craftsman, in the fortress of a feudal baron, or is paid such cash remuneration as will suitably maintain him in an independent position the while he devotes his time and talent to his handicraft. Thus to those who raise loud regrets on the decadence of art in Japan, I would hint that they themselves can help to avert the evil if they are in earnest.

Ceramics.—Early Japanese ceramics do not equal early Chinese in brilliancy and translucency of colour, balanced distribution of design, or symmetry and dignity of form. And if we take examples of the old Sung, Yüen and Ming dynasties, and compare them with old Hizen, Nabashima, Kaga, or Satsuma, this will demonstrate itself. But as we have seen, there is an intelligent reason for this divergency; the Japanese handle and caress their little art objects, and seldom display them as permanently fixed decorative ornaments, therefore variety and interesting details are sought after rather than broad effect. Thus the Japanese artist wanders with his pencil, just as humour leads him, above or below the surface of the object he is decorating, often placing the most careful work in such a position that, from a Western standpoint, it would practically be lost; for he well knows the ceremonious and careful attention his production will secure from his countrymen, and that no quaint fancy, no one touch of his brush, will remain unappreciated. The result, in short, is not a slavish reproduction of a foreign idea, but a successful effort to fulfil the requirements of changed circumstances.

As an instance of this I will refer a visit I paid to a well known potter in Kyoto, to whom a friend of mine some twelve months previously, had entrusted one of the familiar Dresden "Nodding Mandarins," coupled with a request that his figure should be reproduced with Japanese characteristics. Apology after apology had been offered for delay, but on this occasion the artist potter was able to show, in an unfinished state, an array of some dozen unglazed figures, the result of his experiment, each with a typical moving head and tongue of the original, but each a separate study of Japanese male or female character, and each showing individual humour and intelligence. This is the spirit in which the best masters of the present day carry out their work, but to secure work of this order one must perforce await the artist's leisure and inspiration. It is interesting to know that the more wealthy among the Japanese themselves secure the larger portion of these higher-class productions. The inferior and familiar modern ceramic wares exported in such abundance from Japan are of course regulated by the commercial law of supply and demand, and too often show a retrograde tendency.

I need hardly say that, apart from lower grade trade wares, there are excellent modern examples of Japanese ceramics sent to the Western markets, and that the work of some individual potters are of the highest merit, and evince conclusive proofs of progress.

Enamels.—In the art of *cloisonné* enamelling on copper the

Chinese attained a decorative excellence unequalled by any other nation, and the Japanese modified the art to accord with their own specific requirements, paid more regard to detail, and introduced a more sombre key of colouring. These modifications resulted in a loss of general decorative effect, but were again more in harmony with the Japanese habit of close inspection. From a Western point of view, the form of earlier Japanese enamel is unsatisfactory, but form should be judged relatively. The Japanese custom of sitting or kneeling on the floor causes a decorative object to be regarded from a different eye-level, and to arrive at a just opinion, the critic must place himself in a position similar to that in which the artist himself intended the object to be viewed. This last consideration is due also to all essentially Japanese art forms, and particularly the ceramic.

That elaborate detail and low-toned colouring can be readily

altogether satisfactory, as it strives for pictorial effect in a material suggesting definite geometrical treatment, but both processes are proofs of a ready spirit of inventiveness, and the results very far above Western production in "artistic novelties."

A quite recent advance in the enameller's art has, however, none of the foregoing objections. I refer to certain small cabinet specimens of *cloisonné* enamel on copper now being made in Kyoto and Tokyo, which are more delicate and accurate than any enamel work which the skill of any prior race or age has produced. These dainty specimens must be closely inspected in order to appreciate their freedom from mechanical spot or blemish, their delicacy of design, the brilliancy and beauty of their translucent colorings, and the marvel of their manipulative finish. The inventor and developer of this most exquisite diminu-



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ARCHITECTURE.

Decorative Compositions by Francois Ehrmann.

departed from by the Japanese craftsmen, we have proof in the rapidity with which *cloisonné* enamelling on porcelain was popularised some fifteen years ago, when, under the impulse of Western suggestion, the forms were radically altered, the size of the cloisons increased, and more attention paid to bolder decorative effect. The same influence has developed a modification of *cloisonné* enamelling on copper, which promises to enjoy a greater vitality. In this process, called the "half-line *cloisonné*" of Nagoya, the colors are in a higher key, shading off into many intermediate tones, the general scheme of decoration, pictorial and naturalistic, simulating the effect of bold and skillful brushwork. It cannot be said that the process of enamelling on porcelain is an advance in an artistic sense, because one loses the sense of metallic durability, nor is the half-line process

tive art work takes so modest a view of past achievement that he explained, when we made inquiry why his signature was not attached to finished examples, that he refrained from doing so until his work reached the level of his own ideal perfection. This, surely, is the true artistic spirit, and not the least among the fortunate omens of the art future of Japan.

Metalwork.—Bronze working in Japan is a prehistoric art, bronze bells and arrow-heads being discovered concerning whose origin and age nothing is known. About the eighth century many colossal bronze figure, bells, candelabra and incense burners were produced, designed after Chinese models for the requirements of the exotic cult of Buddhism, and no marked alternation or further progress appears to have been made in this art up to the middle of the last century, when a retrograde

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taste developed, also of Chinese origin, for high relief, and overgrown and overloaded ornament.

Immediately prior to European intercourse a complete revolution took place in the bronze industry, introducing a skilful arrangement of varied metal coloring, and a better sense of due balance in ornament. In this latter school, which is absolutely indigenous, high relief does not play so prominent a part, whilst inlaying and incrustation are artistically combined with chasing and engraving. The metallic combinations—inlaying and amalgams for color effect in modern bonzes—form an interesting and separate study.

Iron.—Most interesting developments in cast and wrought ironwork are now produced in Tokyo and Kyoto, and an infinite variation shown in design, the inlaying of gold, silver, copper, and other metals. The Zogan-works in cast-iron are coated with

Carving.—The major glyptic art was for centuries represented in Japan by the wood carver, the Moku butzu, who produced life-sized and colossal figures of the various impersonations of Buddha, and the saints and heroes affiliated with the Buddhistic cult. The monotonous treatment was prescribed by formal rule and Hindu in character. But since the disendowment of the Buddhistic fanes in 1884, this outlet for the craft has nearly ceased the craftsmen have diverted their skill in other directions notably in the production of natural life sized male and female figures. I am not aware of any good examples in Europe, but the fidelity of the modern work is astonishing, and shows a knowledge and appreciation of anatomy, marred by an effort at startling realistic perfection, in exaggerated accord with the Japanese spirit of thoroughness and simplicity. Others of the Moku-butzu school have turned their thoughts to commercial



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a steel-blue or dead-black groundwork, a peculiar kind of "neillo," which is made of lacquer, putty, or Shakudo. Among the most eminent living exponents of this craft are Komi, Iyenori, and Ikokusa. The variety and beauty of Japanese iron nail heads would supply matter for a paper by itself.

Copper does not lend itself well to casting, but is adapted for working up into wire and sheet forms. The Japanese fully recognise this, and utilise this property by engraving copper, and forms with it decorated mounts of boxes, cabinets, &c. The *yurva kashi*, or native kettle for boiling water, is an example in which the hammer marks are left on the comparatively soft metal as an assistance in the decoration of the ground work; an idea happily adopted by Messrs. Tiffany, of New York, in the manufacture of silver goods.

Western requirement. I have here a wood figure representing Ben-kei, the famous warrior and freebooter, carrying away the bell stolen from the monastery of Mi-i-dera, a popular rendering of an essentially indigenous legend, yet contrived to serve the practical purpose of a Western table-gong. This is another instance of perfect continuity combined with successful adaptation.

Passing to the minor glyptic works we find in the class of carvings known as Netsukies an absolutely original and indigenous art. These Netsukies, in ivory, in wood, in bone, and other materials, are so much appreciated and so well known to Western collectors, the schools and principal carvers so duly chronicled and attested, that I need here do no more than allude to them.

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The immediate modern successor to the Netsukie—the Okimono—is made entirely from the Western market, and is for the most part to complex and ambitious, retaining little, if anything, of the freedom, life and humor, the simplicity and directness, of the true Netsukie. There are, however, exceptions to this rule, and I have here a modern Okimono of great beauty and interest, belonging to my friend and travelling companion, Mr. Charles Holme, which suggest the direction development will take, and that it will satisfactorily adjust itself to altered requirements. Since the partial disuse of the Netsukie, or ornamental button, though many of the Japanese adopting European costume, there are various other channels by which the old Netsukie carvers are finding an outlet for their art energies, such as the raised ivory ornamentation applied on folding screens and cabinets, the carving of ivory parasol and umbrella.

The Kyoto embroiderers are the best exponents of modern needlecraft, and their work mainly pictorial and naturalistic in treatment. As an exemplification of combined artistic care and skill, it would be difficult to rival the two specimens I have selected for examples, both the work of the same man, one Kobayashi. The larger of the two, the lovely impressionist view of Fuji-San from the sea coast, kindly lent by my friend, Mr. Augustus Littleton, demonstrates that perspective, and particularly aerial perspective, is an art far better understood by the Japanese than is ordinarily imagined; the design is by K. Imao, and the work so recent that I saw Kobayashi putting the finishing touches to it. The smaller example, a monkey perched on a fir-tree, is after a design by Kishi, and belongs to Mrs. Liberty; and notwithstanding the design appears to be cut up into many divisions of varying materials, it is, as a



KERAMIC ART.



GOLDSMITH'S WORK.

Decorative Compositions by François Ehrmann.

handles, ivory boxes, tusks, &c. I have a modern ivory box in the form of a rice bag, showing within and without a colony of rats carved in every conceivable attitude. I also possess an ivory tusk, engraved with monkeys by Jo-Ko-sui-Kanitzu. These two specimens prove what delightful work the best modern artists can produce.

Embroidery.—Japanese embroidery, which is akin to, yet markedly more diversified than, Chinese embroidery, is now so well known in Europe that it needs no descriptive comments. Recent influences have separated this beautiful craft into two divergent schools; in one the aim is cheapness, and the evil "sweating system" has been adopted with the inevitable results of vulgarity and deterioration; in the other, progress and higher standard is the motto.

matter of fact, one continuous length of white silk. The "miniature" native taste asserts itself in the border surround; this border which simulates applied gold brocade, consists entirely of needlework, and is a deviation from the strict rules of art, as it too successfully reproduces the mechanical regularity of a woven material, yet such a fault—the fault of a too absolute manipulative perfection—compels our admiration. The conclusion is unavoidable, that if living craftsmen produce such artistic, perfect and versatile work as evidenced in these specimens, the vitality of the embroiderer's art in Japan is assured.

Textile Manufactures.—The most characteristic Japanese textile productions during the feudal era were silken brocades and plain stiff silken materials adapted for male and female costumes. These fabrics combined original design, sobriety and richness of

color, with excellency of quality, but the material was abnormally thick, rigid, and stiff. One tendency of Western influence has been to reduce the substance of these silks, which are indeed thicker and heavier than seemed necessary or desirable; another to deteriorate both designs and colorings. In contrast to the thick and stiff ceremonial silks are the silken robes ordinarily worn by the women and children, fulfilling as they do all the requirements of a classic standard of good taste. These supple silken fabrics, both plain and craped, are generally all of one plain and quiet color, others boldly embroidered, some printed with color designs, some with a combination of both printing and embroidery. In passing, I would point out how skilfully, in the combination of printing and embroidering, the Japanese secure an effect as of the entire surface being covered with a rich embroidery by their method of substituting printed tones and colors for the groundwork, and merely touching up and emphasising certain minor portions of the design with the needlework. The result is a great saving of labor, and a hint for our own manufacturers.

Silk velvets are made in Japan of the class of technically known as terry-velvets, including a remarkable variation adapted to pictorial utility. For this latter purpose a design is painted on the silk before the pile is added, and certain parts of the pile afterwards carefully and skilfully cut down, to allow just so much of the drawing to show through as the artist judges necessary to produce either a bold or a delicate effect.

A minor branch of the silk-brocade industry produces stuffs for flat application after the manner of paper. They are used for surface decoration, mounts and borders for kakemonos, folding screens, book-covers, makimonos, and the like. Some of these thin, course brocades, studiously showing the uneven lines of the warp, are really very beautiful, and though an attempt has been made to introduce these and kindred characteristic native manufactures into the Western markets, no satisfactory progress has been made. I am, however, of opinion that suitable applications for Western usage will yet be found for these surface-brocades.

Of color printing on fabrics I have very unsatisfactory results to report. The Japanese have allowed themselves to be swamped by a huge wave of retrograde influence. I spent many unprofitable hours during my stay in Japan vainly endeavoring to select samples of printed silken fabrics which were even passable. For the moment, and, I believe, only for the moment, the Japanese color-printer and fabric-designer has become utterly paralysed and deranged by contact with European influences. I have no time to particularise the cotton industries, but to them the same remarks equally apply.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the Japanese silk industries will in the near future greatly influence the European. Manufacturers are conforming to European requirements, the area appropriated to sericulture and the cultivation of the mulberry is being rapidly extended, the native hand-looms are being supplemented by power-looms and the latest scientific mechanical appliances of the West. The material is a home production, the workmen are industrious and deft, the cost of labor is far below the European scale, and the expense of ocean transit for an article occupying so small a bulk as manufactured silk is merely nominal. I have here samples of what is known as "gros-grain" silk, made on Japanese power-looms, which—lacking the meretricious surface lustre, and the substance produced by artificial weighing in Lyons silk at the same cost—are, as regards purity of material and prospective durability, far more satisfactory. Lyons and Milan will soon have no insignificant rival in the Japanese market.

Flower Decoration.—The arrangement of cut branches, leaves, and flowers for interior decoration should rank among the applied arts of Japan, so carefully is the subject studied and so charming the result obtained. It is an art with fixed canons, on which innumerable treatises are printed, long and patient courses of studies are devoted—cultivated by high and low, rich and poor, and taught by regular tutors and professors. The intense love of nature innate in every Japanese finds here a congenial form of expression which is open to dwellers in town and country alike. The highways and byways of the cities are supplied with numerous flower markets, and places set apart for open competitors. Prizes under set rules and regulations are awarded to successful candidates, and no private or public reception takes place without the aid of a duly qualified professor being called in to arrange the inevitable floral decorations.

I suppose this subject cannot be accurately classified; but it is so intimately associated in Japan with everything connected

with decoration, and so completely a part of the everyday life of the Japanese, that to ignore it would be to ignore a characteristic which proclaims its influence in every direction; it is, indeed, of very great importance in estimating the artistic character of the people, and in forming a judgment as to the direction in which we may look for the future development of the decorative and minor constructive arts—as a people permeated with so strong a love for, and appreciation of, the beauties in nature must always continue to express themselves artistically and æsthetically.

YACHT FURNISHINGS.

IN an article on the "The Social Side of Yachting," in the September *Harper's* a description is given of the internal furnishings and decorations of two typical steam yachts, one being a family ship and the other the cruiser of a bachelor, both being first rate, well found, and fit for service in any navigable waters in the world.

"The former" says the writer, "has on deck three steal houses teak-sheathed and mahogany lined; in the forward one is a smoking-room, furnished with divans and tables, and so framed with plate-glass windows as to give an uninterrupted view ahead and on each beam. Aft of this are a chart-room and cabin kitchen, between which a vestibule and carved oak stairway leading below to the saloon and owner's quarters. The saloon is thirty-one feet wide, and eighteen long; its floor is a mosaic of hard woods, and the sides and ceiling are wainscoted and panelled with polished native woods, and finished in an enamel of white and gold. A carved mantel and fireplace face the entrance; overhead is a domed skylight; and in every available spot, rugs, tapestries, pictures, cabinets, lamps, the hundred and one accessories of the most opulent homes, accentuate the warmth of color. Forward of this are eight state-rooms, built of cherry and walnut picked out in white and gold, and furnished with rugs and tapestries. Each has a hand carved bed, dressing-table, chiffonier, and wardrobe. In the floor a porcelain bath is let so deftly that the trap can scarcely be seen, even when the rug is removed. In a corner a Scotch marble basin is supplied with hot, cold and salt water. Electric bells and incandescent lamps are at command, and through a wide-rimmed, polished air port a cheering measure of sky and sea is secured. A nursery nineteen feet long, eleven in width, complete the owners special quarters. In this well ventilated anomaly on shipboard, a child's berth is built four feet from the floor. Beneath this, sliding snugly out board in the daytime, is a nurse's bed; this can be extended to such a distance at night that should the child be thrown out in bad weather by a lurch or roll, it will land safely on the mattress below or upon its attendant, who is presumably a cheerfully elastic person.

A scuttle in the pantry gives access to the store-room, wet and dry, to the ice locker, and to the apparatus for making artificial ice. A separate stairway connects the pantry with the kitchen above, which may thus be called "hygienic," as it is in every sense on the roof. These quarters, with the linen closets, clothes lockers, toilet-rooms, and glass armory, occupy the space in the centre of the ship between the first water-tight compartment, where the crew live in downy ease, and the forward bulk-head of the boiler room, where the coal-heavers and firemen smoke surreptitiously the soothing but penetrating black 'baccy. A passageway, recessed and upholstered at one point to give a view of the machinery, leads aft to a library fitted and furnished as luxuriously as the saloon. Aft of this are seven state-rooms for guests, no less perfectly appointed than those of the family, and with a separate companionway. In the after-house on deck is a ladies' saloon and a fair weather stateroom for the owner, and from it a stairway leads to the library. This vessel cruises at home and abroad, and carries a crew of fifty. Her cost was three hundred thousand dollars, and the annual expenditure amounts to one hundred thousand.

In the second steamer, the smoking-room is of oak, the wainscoting and ceiling are built of artistically panelled mahogany, and the furniture is upholstered in olive green plush. Heavy plate-glass windows give a view half-way around the horizon and if any one knows a better place to smoke a cigar at anchor or under way, let him stand and deliver. Aft of this is the chart-room, flanked by a carved stairway leading below. In the saloon, brass chandeliers, decorated in the Persian style, hang clear of a skylight colored in harmony with a general treatment. The mantel, panelled in carved old English oak, is supported by dolphins, and the nickel grate is fitted in a recess tiled with blue